

Research Report

The Michigan Family Independence Agency's Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool and Video Interviewing

Prepared by:



CPS Human Resource Services

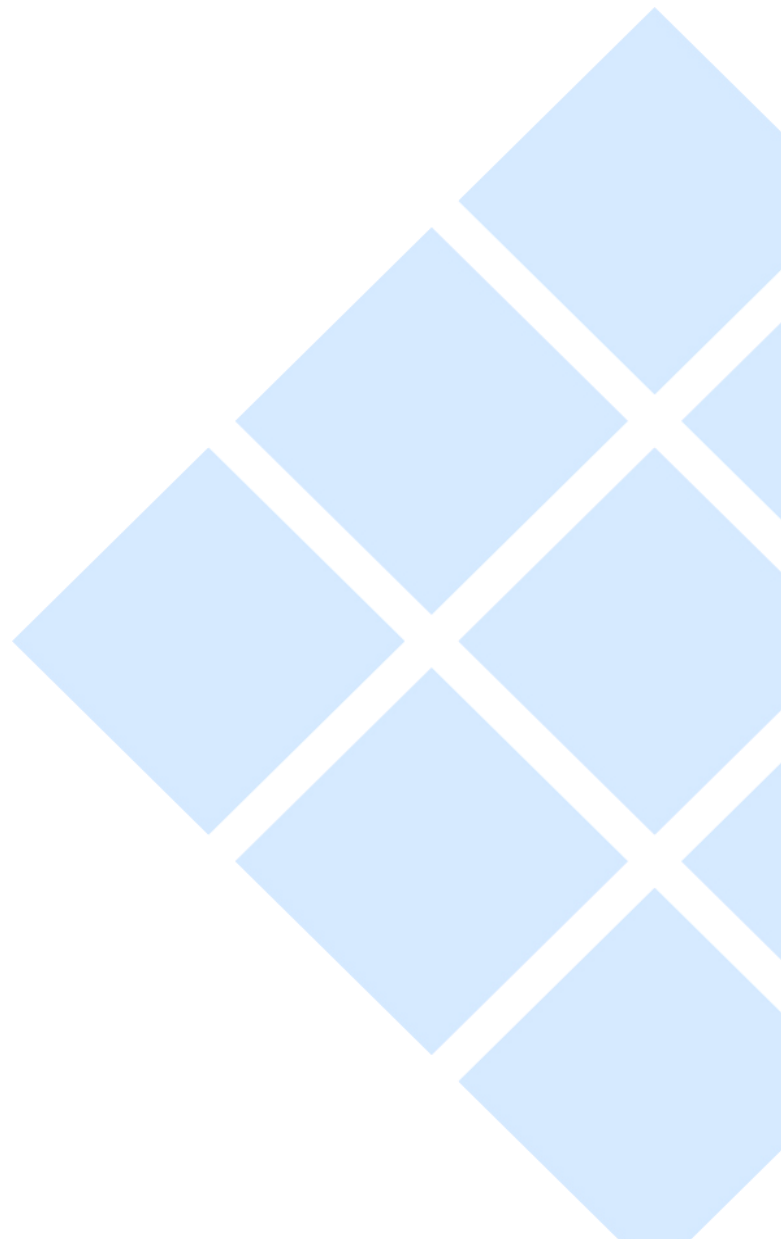
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CCHP and Video Interviewing

One of the key components of the Family Independence Agency's (FIA) Centrally Coordinated Hiring Pool (CCHP) is the use of field supervisors on centralized hiring panels. Panels are held in either Lansing or Detroit, often requiring participants to travel long distances. Even though the CCHP process is less costly than the traditional hiring process, the FIA recognizes that greater savings could be realized by reducing or eliminating these travel expenses.

Although never implemented, the FIA considered the option of having the Office of Human Resources (OHR) videotape applicant interviews and sending the tapes to local county supervisors for evaluation and scoring. When preparing its grant application to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), the FIA proposed that a feasibility study be done on adopting videotaped interviews. The AECF asked CPS Human Resource Services (CPS) to conduct the feasibility study.

Our methodology of evaluating FIA's concept for videotaping interviews has three components:

1. A survey of the recent literature.
2. The identification and process review of other public sector jurisdictions using a similar process.
3. A cost analysis.

Literature Review

In reviewing the relevant literature, we found that there has been increasing interest in the introduction of technology into the selection process (see References, page M-4).

A growing number of employers are introducing technological innovations into their recruitment and selection process. These include:

- Screening job applicants by telephone. This is perhaps the simplest and most widespread use of technology. By conducting a brief, structured telephone interview, a job screener is able to eliminate marginal applicants at far less cost than conducting a face-to-face interview.
- Using video conferencing to schedule "remote" interviews and conducting them in much the same way as face-to-face interviews.
- Relying on search firms to use video conferences to conduct and record interviews. Employers then review the recorded tapes to screen the applicant pool.

- Using search firms who recruit and interview applicants, and then post those interviews on the internet where they can be viewed for a fee.
- Using search firms who videotape job applicants describing their education and work experience, and then send the tapes to employers in the same way they would send resumes.

One of the primary reasons for adopting these strategies is cost containment. It is obviously far less expensive to conduct a video conference than it is to pay the travel expenses for job applicants to appear for an in-person interview. Using telephones and video interviews as screening tools also saves time and avoids the frustration that results when unqualified candidates appear for in-person interviews.

The literature cites many advantages for the use of videotaped interviews. Employers can use videotaped interviews to:

- Stop and replay important or ambiguous segments.
- Compare the answers of different candidates on the same question.
- Watch applicant interviews any time and any where.
- Focus on the most promising candidates.
- Allow a larger group of managers to view, evaluate, and/or score them than for individual face-to-face interviews.
- Send to other company locations.
- Observe applicants more closely than during face-to-face interviews – reviewers need not focus on taking notes.
- Monitor interviewing and scoring methods.
- Provide material for training purposes.
- Completely document the interview process.
- Lower the total cost of recruitment and selection.

Perhaps the greatest reservation about videotape interviewing has to do with participant attitudes. If participants are resistant to the process or intimidated by the technology, the results may be adversely affected. However, interviewers have observed that although some interviewees initially tend to be uncomfortable with the process, most quickly overcome their discomfort and awareness of the process. (Johnson, 1991).

Specific Public Sector Experiences

We were able to identify only one public-sector jurisdiction that makes extensive use of videotaped interviews to make final selection decisions.

The City of Omaha began using video equipment to record the interviews of all fire and police candidates in 1998. Their managers had become concerned with the amount of time required for the interview process, and were particularly frustrated with the wasted time between scheduled interviews, “no-shows,” and interviews with obviously unqualified applicants.

For a number of years, the city had been using video cameras as part of their assessment center process, and decided to use the equipment to record the interviews of job applicants. Initially, only the interviews of fire and police candidates were video recorded. More recently, the city began videotaping interviews for other types of positions as a matter of convenience, such as when scheduling problems prevent all interview panel members from being available at the same time.

The video equipment is operated by the person conducting the interview, and all applicants are asked the same questions. Duplicate tapes are made and sent to supervisors who review and score them at their convenience. Reviewers can elect to view them at home. All tapes are labeled, coded, and indexed so specific interviews can be easily retrieved. The city retains the tapes for seven years.

The City of Omaha believes that the use of videotapes has resulted in tremendous savings in time and money. They see no disadvantages to the system. Although some applicants are initially uncomfortable with being videotaped, they become focused on the interview and quickly adapt. In the interview scheduling letters, the city informs job candidates that the interview will be videotaped.

Cost Analysis

For purposes of this analysis, we compared the FIA’s costs of conducting CCHP interviews using their current process with the new model they are considering (this model is similar to the City of Omaha’s).

Under the new model, an experienced, professional interviewer would use a video camera while conducting behavioral interviews. The interviewer would ask each applicant the same basic questions, who would ask probing follow-up questions as is done currently by interview panel members. The tapes of the interviews would be sent to supervisors for evaluation, who would complete the scoring in much the same way as under the current system. The major difference is that the evaluation of the interview would occur in the supervisors’ work locations and scheduled at their convenience.

Table M-1 (page M-4) compares the cost of the interview and applicant scoring using the current method with the cost using the video-interview method. Based on this analysis, we estimate that the costs could be reduced by at least 16 percent (from \$107.47 per interview to \$90.30 per interview) with the videotape method. The savings would very likely be even greater because we did not factor in the wasted time the interviewers experience when

applicants fail to show up. Videos of obviously unqualified interviewees would also not need to be scored, saving further time and costs.

Table M-1: Cost Comparison – Current FIA Interviewing/Scoring Process and Videotape Interviewing/Scoring Process

Cost Item	Current Method	Current Cost	Video Interview	Video Cost
Conducting 5 Interviews	8 hours * 2 Supervisors * \$28.80	\$460.80	5 hours * 1 HR Representative * \$26.80	\$134.00
Scoring 5 Interviews	Included above	\$0.00	5 hours * 2 Supervisors * \$28.80	\$288.00
Mileage	90 miles * 2 Supervisors * \$.328	\$59.04		\$0.00
Lunch	2 Supervisors * \$8.75	\$17.50		\$0.00
Duplicating, Indexing and Mailing Tapes		\$0.00	.25 hours * \$16 * 5 tapes	\$20.00
Videotape Costs		\$0.00	\$2/original + 5 duplicates * \$1.50	\$9.50
Total Cost for 5 Interviews		\$537.34		\$451.50
Total Cost for 1 Interview		\$107.47		\$90.30

As shown in Table M-1, the increased costs of having a HR specialist conduct the interview is more than offset by the savings in time and costs of supervisors traveling to the centralized interview location.

The foregoing cost comparison does not include the one-time expenditure for the necessary equipment to conduct video interviews. An adequate camcorder could be purchased for less than \$500, and a tripod, microphone, and VCR could be purchased for less than \$50 each. Since the FIA has streamlined their process by having three panels conduct interviews simultaneously, they may wish to consider purchasing additional equipment. FIA may also want to consider linking two VCRs to each camcorder during the interview to preclude the need for duplicating tapes. Enough equipment to conduct interviews in three separate rooms simultaneously could be purchased for approximately \$1,500.

Although the dollar savings from the videotaping of interviews is not substantial, the convenience to supervisors in the field would be significant. From the supervisor's perspective, evaluating five interviews in less than five hours, in their own office, at their own convenience is certainly preferable to spending upwards of eight hours, including travel, away from their offices.

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